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## **main findings**

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Yearbook 2010

# The Quality of the Media

## Executive Summary

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Switzerland

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## Yearbook 2010: The Quality of the Media – Switzerland

### What is the purpose of this Yearbook?

The aim of this Yearbook is to increase awareness for the importance of quality of the media. The Yearbook will be a resource for people working in the media, those involved in politics, economics or academia and anyone with an interest in media trends and what the media are saying. This Yearbook is based on the understanding that the quality of democracy depends on the quality of the communication of information to the public by the media. The Yearbook is designed to help convey the idea that the quality of the media is an important theme in public communication.

### Who is responsible for this Yearbook?

The Yearbook is produced and published by the fög – the Center for Research on the Public Sphere and Society at the University of Zurich ([www.foeg.uzh.ch](http://www.foeg.uzh.ch)). The following authors have contributed to the Yearbook: Seyhan Bayraktar, Pascal Bürgis, Mark Eisenegger, Patrik Ettinger, Kurt Imhof, Esther Kamber, Jens Lucht, Jörg Schneider, Mario Schranz and Linards Udriš.

It receives support from the Stiftung Öffentlichkeit und Gesellschaft (Foundation for the Public Sphere and Society, [www.oeffentlichkeit.ch](http://www.oeffentlichkeit.ch)). The Board of Trustees is made up of Christine Egerszegi-Obrist, Gabriele M. Paltzer-Lang, Kurt Imhof, Yves Kugelman, Oswald Sigg and Roger de Weck (until June 2010).

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### Where is this Yearbook published?

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## Main findings

It was as early as the 5th century BC in the city-state of Athens that one of mankind's most powerful utopian ideals became established, namely that, in a free society, there must be free public communication, in order for the better argument to win the day. Indeed, the history of democracy shows that it fails without high-quality public debate. The public sphere is where problems which affect society as a whole and which need to be resolved are aired and discussed (the forum function). It serves to legitimise and control the state authorities and the holders of power in society. Without public communication, that necessary loyalty between citizens, which is essential in a self-regulating community based on the rule of law, would not exist (the social integration function). This means that the quality of democracy is inextricably linked to the quality of the public debate which results from the way in which the media convey information.

However, since the decline of party newspapers on the one hand and the introduction of a dual system of public and commercial audio-visual media in the 1980s on the other, the media system has emerged as a separate sphere, and one which lacks any body that would carry out critical self-observation, document changes in the media system and the quality of public communication, and subject it to public debate. It was to fill this gap that the Yearbook 2010 "Qualität der Medien – Schweiz Suisse Svizzera" ("The Quality of the Media – Switzerland") was created. Published for the first time in 2010, and thereafter for as long as the necessary funding is available, it will each year cast an eye over the changes in the media structures and media supply that is available and the quality of the media in Switzerland. It will consider not only the differences between the media structures in the different linguistic regions of the country, the movement of the audience between the various different media forms, the ownership and revenue structures of publishing houses, the process of concentration in the industry and changes in the way media are consumed, but also changes in content and in the quality of reporting. It will take account of all the different forms of information media i.e., newspapers, news channels run by private and public radio and TV providers and the news websites in the online sector.

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The research looks at the Swiss media arena on two levels. Firstly, it examines the media structures and media supply that is available i.e., the distinguishing features and changing dynamics of the media infrastructure in Switzerland. Secondly, it assesses the quality of the content of the leading media outlets of all forms (press, radio, TV, online).

1. *Analysis of Switzerland's media structures:* Just like a transport network, the infrastructure of the information media is an integral part of social infrastructure and represents a public service that is indispensable for democratic self-regulation. The state of the media infrastructure determines whether or not the public sphere can meet the quality standards that are required in a fully functioning community. This is why the first step for this Yearbook will be to examine the key features and changes in media structures in Switzerland. The work is based on secondary data from relevant research on the use and dissemination of those media outlets which reach at least 0.5% of the so-called "universe" (i.e., everyone over the age of 15 in each of Switzerland's main linguistic regions). In 2009, there were 137 such outlets. In addition, the study also includes economic data about the media from various sources, as well as data about the media companies which control and produce the relevant outlets and services.

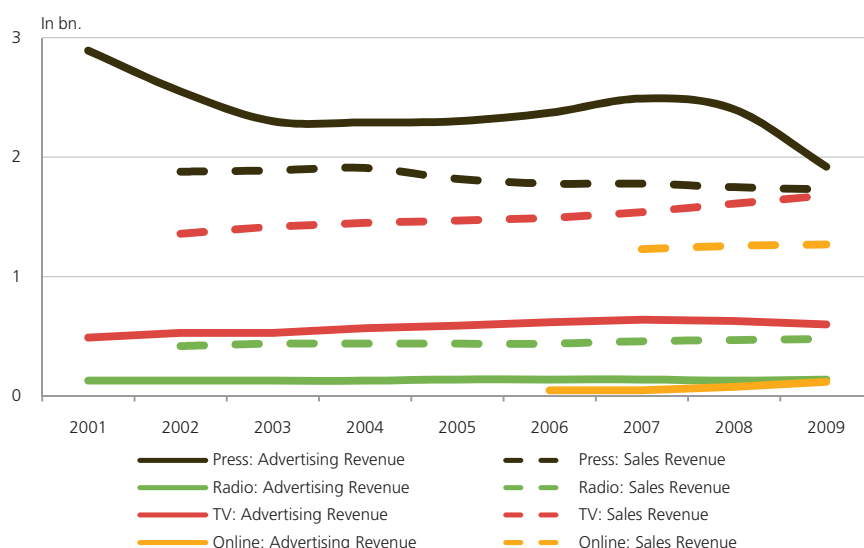
2. *Assessing the quality of the leading Swiss media outlets:* The quality of reporting is assessed in terms of the four aspects of diversity, social relevance, topicality and professionalism. These aspects of quality are derived from the requirements for public communication which were originally shaped by the Enlightenment movement. They have been further developed in journalistic guidelines and ethics, in media policy and in quality-related research by social scientists. From the basic sample of 137 media outlets, a sub-set of the 46 leading media outlets from the press, radio, TV and online in Switzerland's three main linguistic regions was selected and subjected to detailed assessment of the quality of their content.

Below is a summary of the main findings of the research into the media structures and quality of reporting in Switzerland. The findings are divided into the following sections, which reflects the same structure as the Year-book itself:

1. *Media arena (Section I):* This section evaluates the main findings on the media structures and the quality of reporting for the entire Swiss media arena. Of special interest here are the differences between the various media types – press, radio, TV and online – and comparisons between linguistic regions.
2. *Media types: press, radio, TV, online (Sections II–V):* The findings that apply to all media forms in the Swiss media arena are followed by the results of specific analyses of the various forms: press, radio, TV and online.
3. *In-depth analyses (Section VI):* Finally, the main findings of the two in-depth analyses are assessed. In this Year-book, media coverage of the Minaret Initiative and media coverage of the economy with special reference to the economic crisis were the areas subjected to detailed study.

## 1. Swiss media arena

- *Radical changes:* The Swiss media arena is undergoing a process of transformation. Firstly, online services have opened up a new media channel which is primarily drawing away the youth sector of the public from the traditional forms such as the press, radio and TV. Secondly, a culture of free services has established itself both online and offline, which is driving forward the repackaging and reusing of the same material across different media, and, for the press, is bringing about what is virtually self-destruction for the paid-for media. Thirdly, the financial position of most of the information media in Switzerland has seriously deteriorated, partly as a consequence of the current economic crisis. Advertising revenue, which for the commercial media accounts for a large share of their income, has dropped dramatically (see diagram 1). This is threatening the very existence of, in particular, the paid-for press (paid subscription newspapers, tabloids, Sunday papers and magazines). All these developments are resulting in stratification and segmentation which are affecting the whole media arena: with more limited resources, and in the struggle to attract the short attention span of the audience and the reduced advertising revenue, the news media are striving to meet the needs of media consumers with lower-cost information. In all forms of media (press, radio, TV, online), we see an increase – albeit to varying degrees – in the importance of so-called soft news that is cheaper to produce. Because this effect is particularly marked in the free media, which are of poorer quality, different user groups are being provided with very different news agendas (depending essentially on age and education).
- *Crisis in the Swiss media:* In the new competitive relationship between the information media, it has been mainly since 2005 that the effect of the increasing use of online services has been felt by the traditional forms (press, radio, TV). In general, television is suffering from a loss of reach among younger age groups, while interest in news programmes on both TV and radio is declining, and the press has launched online news websites which take readers away from the printed editions and which are as yet by no means guaranteed to be able to finance themselves. The news websites are loss-making undertakings for a press that is in dire straits anyway. They



**Diagram 1: Revenue from advertising and sales for the various media forms – trends from 2001 to 2009**

The diagram shows the trends in the revenue from advertising and sales for the various media forms. The revenue from sales includes the proportion of the licence fee received by the public broadcasters and the cost of accessing the media (e.g., Internet costs). Data for sales revenue is only available from 2002, data for the online sector from 2006 or in some cases 2007.

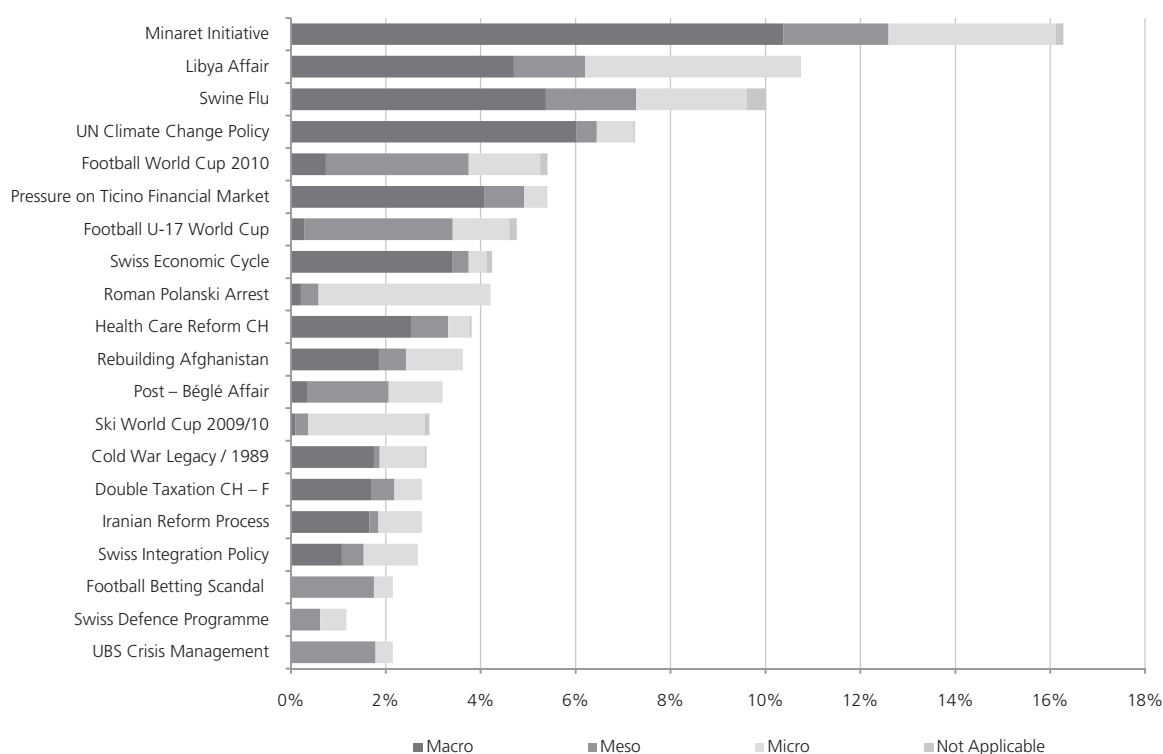
Interpretation example: The advertising revenue of the press in 2009 (CHF 1.92 billion) was down by 34% compared with 2001 (CHF 2.89 billion). Between 2008 (CHF 2.41 billion) and 2009 alone, the press lost a high on disastrous 20% of its advertising revenue, as a consequence of the economic crisis. It is primarily the press that has suffered from the decline in the advertising market since 2001, because it is most severely affected by volatility in the economy. The broadcasting advertising market, which is much smaller than the press market, continued to grow slowly, but television also lost over 5% between 2008 and 2009 – at a time when revenue from sales was increasing. Online advertising was initially very small-scale, but from these small beginnings it is growing steadily (Source: Swiss Advertising Statistics Foundation, published by Schweizer Presse).

benefit from the reputation of their parent companies, but at the same time they tarnish that reputation, because the resources that are deployed are insufficient to allow good-quality journalism. There have been free offline press publications since as long ago as 1999, even before the existence of free online services. In German-speaking Switzerland, the free newspapers *20 Minuten* and *Metropol* established themselves very quickly, putting pressure on the tabloids and paid subscription newspapers. In 2001, the circulation of the two free papers was already almost double that of the established tabloid newspaper *Blick*. Since then, the triumphal march of the free papers has continued ever faster: in French-speaking Switzerland, they are the newspapers with the highest circulation and, in German-speaking Switzerland, *20 Minuten* is the most popular daily paper. In Switzerland, formerly “land of the press”, the paid subscription newspapers that

are crucial from a journalistic point of view are losing ground in terms of circulation, usage and revenue. In general, their business models are too heavily dependent on advertising revenue, which is volatile and susceptible to economic crises, and which is also being siphoned off by other entities (search engines and social networking sites). At the same time, the culture of free papers has greatly reduced the willingness of media consumers to pay for journalism. This shift from paid-for to free media encourages the process of concentration in the industry, to enable companies to benefit from the economies of scale and from multiple cross-media sales. The business model of running key information media not on ethics of conviction, or by using licence fees, but purely for profit – an approach which has historically only worked for a start period – is coming to an end. This poses a real challenge for media policy in a democracy.

- *Quality differences and deficits:* The degree to which the different media types contribute to the quality of reporting in Switzerland varies greatly. The news broadcasts of the public audio-visual media (especially radio and to a lesser extent television), and the paid subscription newspapers make the biggest contribution to topics of general relevance to society. For example, communication events relating to weighty and complex legislative processes, and discussion of subjects relating to foreign or economic policy, are mainly to be found on public radio stations and in the paid subscription newspapers. By contrast, the tabloid and free papers, private broadcasters and online media concentrate primarily on the particularistic, reporting mainly human interest or sports stories. In these media, the key social spheres of politics, economics and culture are presented in a far more personalised way, with a focus on private lives and emotional appeal. Commercial television and radio channels and the online media also give priority to sport or to stories about conflicts which can be given a personal touch, threats of any kind, and human interest stories. This means that, in the tabloid press and on commercial TV channels, and especially in the free newspapers and online media, diversity and social relevance are very restricted, and the “forum function” i.e., presenting an argumentative exchange of views or highlighting issues requiring a political solution, is only fulfilled to a limited extent.
- *Social integration function:* The paid subscription newspapers and public-service radio and television channels perform an important social integration function. Especially the radio channels operated by the SRG, the Swiss Broadcasting Corporation, provide the three main linguistic regions with information of national and international importance. The same is true of Sunday newspapers and magazines. On the other hand, the contribution made to national cohesion by regionally focussed commercial radio stations and, above all, the equally regionally/locally focussed commercial television channels and online media is very low. If there is any similarity between the online arenas in the different linguistic regions, it is only perhaps in human interest stories, while they tend to diverge on stories relating to social and political problems. Judging from the results of a comparison of the agendas of all media forms in Switzerland’s three main linguistic regions for the last quarter of 2009, then Switzerland is primarily unified by problems relating to sovereignty (the Libya affair), health scares (swine flu), debates in a direct democracy (the Minaret Initiative) and sporting events (see diagram 2). More complex political and economic stories of national importance (e.g., the revision of the Swiss Federal Health Insurance Act [KVG]) are unlikely to attract the same interest across all linguistic regions when judged by similar relevance factors.
- *Growing focus on internal affairs at the expense of reporting of foreign news:* Precisely now, in the age of globalisation, interest in the rest of the world is diminishing in favour of greater focus on national and, particularly, regional affairs (see diagram 3). The focus by the Swiss media arena on internal affairs at the expense of reporting of foreign news has increased markedly over time. It is the public broadcasters, especially the radio, and the inter-regional paid subscription newspapers that contribute most to relevant international reporting (as they also do at the national level). However, even here the world has shrunk. To put it differently, knowledge about the world, which in a small country like Switzerland was built up by close observation of world affairs from the perspective of three linguistic areas, has been diminished. The new media – free papers and news websites – but also the serious regional daily papers, tend to reduce their world coverage to reports from news agencies. User groups of these media perceive the world outside Switzerland as consisting only of a series of crises, wars, catastrophes and personal affairs. Alongside the mainly regional focus of commercial broadcasters and the regional paid subscription newspapers, there is also a clear journalistic focus on human interest and sports stories.
- *Soft news and all-round journalism:* It is primarily the paid subscription newspapers, the Sunday papers, public-service radio channels and, to a slightly lesser extent, public-service television that provide coverage offering context and background information. This is associated with a higher proportion of hard news and less reporting of the personal, the emotional and the private. By contrast,





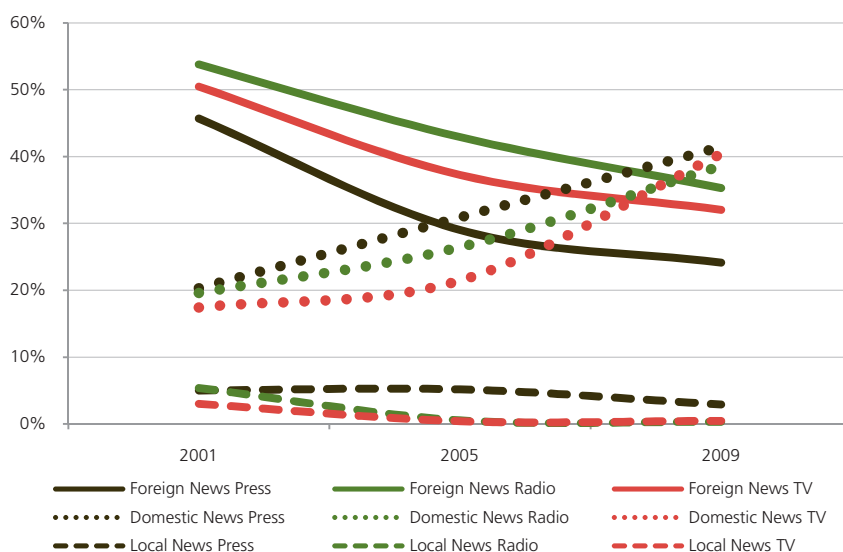
**Diagram 2: Media agenda in Switzerland – the top 20 communication events**

The diagram shows the 20 most important communication events (CEs) in the Swiss media arena. The CEs are put in order depending on their share of the total reporting for these top 20 events. The tiered columns show, for each CE, the extent to which different levels of society were addressed in the total reporting of the top 20 CEs. The chart is based on all items about the top 20 CEs as found in the analysis of front page and lead stories between 5 October and 31 December 2009 (n = 3256).

Interpretation example: The communication event referred to as the Minaret Initiative received most attention (ranked 1st) in the Swiss media arena during the period in question. 14.2% of the reporting of the top 20 CEs was about the Minaret Initiative. Reporting on this CE at the macro level accounted for 9.8% of the total reporting of the top 20 CEs (and 69% for that particular CE). In general, stories from politics and the economy dominated the agenda, but sports events were also among the most important CEs in the fourth quarter of 2009. Several of the political and economic stories lent themselves to being portrayed as conflicts with an element of scandal or personal interest, and this partly explains their popularity. Attention was only paid to stories relating to politics and economic policy on account of the Swiss system of direct democracy, and only by presenting the issues as conflicts and in the context of there being great pressure to reach a decision. Even in the most acute conflicts, fundamental questions such as ways of resolving the issue were definitely in the background. Any more thoughtful reporting, for example on the end of the Cold War or the problem of the rule of law in the Minaret Debate, only had any chance of attracting attention if the debate was presented as a historical event or when it was all over.

the news websites, tabloids and free papers and the news broadcasts of commercial TV channels practise a kind of all-round journalism that is barely specialised at all and is strongly focused on soft news. In these media, the central task of journalistic work, namely to put events into context on the basis of extensive research, is hardly performed at all any more (with the exception of serious crime in the tabloids).

- *Poor-quality media on the rise:* The paid-for press finds itself in a deep financial crisis and the use of free papers and online media will only increase compared with press, radio and television, because people, especially younger age groups (those between 15 and 35), have become accustomed to a culture of poor-quality free services. It can therefore be assumed that, in future, those media types and forms which are currently contributing little to qual-



**Diagram 3: Inductive full-sample collection of the top 50 communication events – developments in political reporting by geographical area between 2001 and 2009**

For the media forms of press, radio and TV, the diagram shows the proportion of reporting on political affairs abroad (or on a global scale), at national and regional level. The diagram is based on the 50 most significant communication events (CEs) per year in the (German-speaking) Swiss media arena. The CEs were measured by means of a continuous inductive collection of complete newspaper editions or news broadcasts for every day of the years 2001, 2005 and 2009 ( $n = 47,689$  items). The media sample for this extensive diachronic full collection is necessarily different from the sample used in the front-page analysis, in that it includes more items but fewer linguistic regions and media forms (partly because it is no longer possible systematically to recover online news websites retrospectively for 2001 and 2005). The inductive full-sample collection included the following media outlets: *Blick*, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, *NZZ am Sonntag* (not for 2001), *Tages-Anzeiger*, *SonntagsBlick*, *SonntagsZeitung* (press), *Echo der Zeit*, *Rendez-vous* (radio), *Tagesschau* and *10vor10* (TV). The data is based on all items relating to the top 50 CEs and includes all the social spheres and areas covered by a particular outlet (e.g., also including human interest – but the figures are only shown for those items which are about the social sphere of politics, so that is why the percentages for each media form do not add up to 100%).

Interpretation example: In 2001, the proportion of political reporting about foreign affairs in the press was 46%, in 2005 29% and in 2009 only 24%. At the same time, the proportion of political reporting at national level rose from 20% in 2001 to 31% in 2005 and 41% in 2009. So, precisely at a time of globalisation and a global financial and economic crisis, the Swiss media arena is paying less attention to internationally relevant events.

ity journalism will continue to gain in importance. This will in turn take further resources away from quality journalism and place human interest stories still further up the agenda of the media in the different linguistic regions and the Swiss media arena in general. As yet, there has been barely any debate about the political and economic costs of the reduction in foreign reporting, the increase in soft news and episodic journalism at the expense of the kind that takes time to research stories and put them into context, or about the erosion of the standing of journalism as a profession and the triumphal march

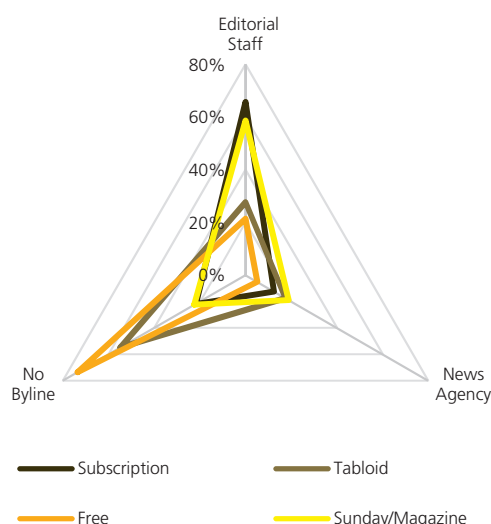
of the free culture. This Yearbook will continue to monitor this trend.

## 2. Press

- *Press crisis:* We can thank the press, in the form of paid subscription newspapers – as the most traditional providers of information for the general public – for still offering the most diverse agendas and the most sustainable reporting. Nevertheless, the Swiss press finds itself in a profound crisis. Not only

the culture of free services online, but also, and especially, the free papers offline themselves threaten the very existence of paid subscription newspapers. Only the Sunday papers, along with the free newspapers, are able to remain on anything approaching a sound economic footing. In French-speaking Switzerland, the free press already enjoys a wider circulation than any other type of printed news publication. This competition within the news press from free papers hits the tabloid and paid subscription newspapers particularly hard. Further competition comes in the form of online information portals operated by telecommunications companies and search engines (e.g., Google), websites for small ads and social networking sites (such as Facebook), while the industry's own news websites do not generate sufficient revenue to allow for good-quality journalism.

- *Stratification, concentration and cuts:* The financial constraints and increased competitive pressure from free papers are further intensifying the already strong trend towards concentration in the press sector. We are continuing to see more cuts, conversions, mergers and combining of editorial offices, reduced networks of correspondents and the further spread of the concept of “families” of newspapers. The most prominent examples of this trend are the merger between *Tamedia* and *Edipresse*, the restructuring of the balance of ownership in the Zurich region and eastern Switzerland between *Tamedia* and the *Freie Presse Holding AG (NZZ Group)* – including at the expense of independent providers –, the cuts in the network of correspondents at the *NZZ* and the partial amalgamation of the editorial offices of the *Tages-Anzeiger* and *Bund*. The rapid rise in the number of news websites on the Internet, the widespread availability of cheaply produced soft news, multiple cross-media sales of the same material, increased buying-in of ready-made material and greater focusing on specific target groups are further side-effects of the crisis in the press. This has the overall effect of strengthening the tendency towards stratification in the press arena: the print media in general – though to a lesser extent the inter-regional paid subscription newspapers *NZZ* and *Le Temps* and the more regionally focused *Tages-Anzeiger* and *Bund* – are focusing more, in the way



**Diagram 4: Political section – transparency of sources and news items created by the editorial staff**

The diagram shows, for the political sections of each press outlet, the percentage of news items created by the editorial staff, agency reports and feature articles with no byline. It is based on all articles produced in the political section during the week chosen for the random sample, from 23 to 29 November 2009 (n = 4193).

Interpretation example: When the different press types were compared, the free press was seen to have the fewest news items created by the editorial staff in its political section (21%) and the highest proportion of feature articles with no byline (74%). If this result is put together with the quota of news consumption i.e., the circulation rate of a particular press type as a proportion of the population in each linguistic region, this shows that the triumphal march of the free press in German-speaking Switzerland, and even more so in French-speaking Switzerland, is leading to a fundamental loss of professionalism in the Swiss press, in terms of both transparency of sources and in the degree to which news is created by the editorial staff. The market leaders, with regard to which editorial staff create most news items in the political section, are the paid subscription newspapers, although in papers with a regional focus, most of the journalistic resources go into regional reporting. In the inter-regional *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* and *Le Temps*, however, the focus is on national and international political reporting.

they select, present and interpret news, on the need of media consumers for entertainment rather than the need of Swiss citizens for information.

- *Quality divide between regional and inter-regional paid subscription newspapers:* The differences in quality between the inter-regional and regional paid subscription newspapers are considerable. The regional paid subscription newspapers tend to neglect reporting on national and international

politics, economic and cultural affairs, and pursue a strategy of regional focus and tabloidisation. This focus on regional target groups goes hand in hand with giving more space to human interest stories, advice columns and entertainment. As for foreign news reporting on political issues, the regional paid subscription newspapers are even being overtaken by the tabloids. Even the inter-regional paid subscription newspapers are cutting back on or amalgamating their correspondent networks and editorial infrastructure. This is affecting foreign news and (foreign) business news reporting particularly badly. The fine tradition of Swiss foreign reporting is beginning to crumble precisely in this age of globalisation.

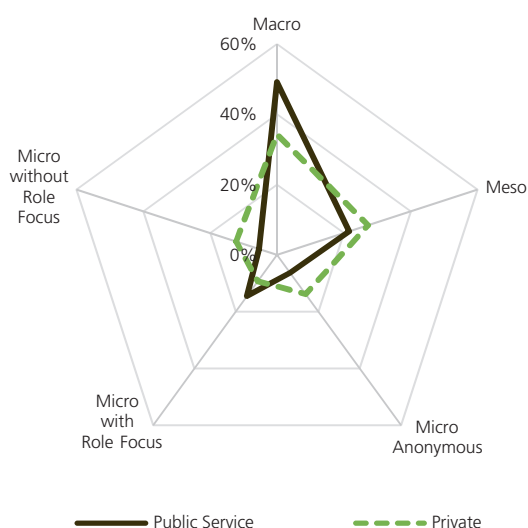
- *Noticeably poorer quality reporting in free newspapers:* The shift by the general public towards free papers is driven by a reduced willingness to pay for information, combined with the lowering of the quality of reporting in the paid subscription newspapers. When all types of printed publication are compared, the free papers offer the most infotainment, with emotional and tabloid appeal, and have less consistent and highly episodic news management. The columns of free newspapers are dominated by human interest and sports stories. If national or international stories of social importance do appear on the free newspapers' agenda, then it is in the form of news agency reports that have been little altered, if at all. It is also in the free newspapers that the lack of professionalism is most apparent, in relation to transparency of sources and editorial input (see diagram 4). Free papers are increasingly read by younger members of the public, who are also less likely than average to read paid subscription newspapers. In combination with the news websites that are also free, the free papers are mostly responsible for the decline in the quality of journalism in the media arena.
- *Tabloid newspapers exposed to cut-throat competition:* As a result of the proliferation of human interest stories in the majority of information media, tabloids are now exposed to competition which threatens to crowd them out in their very area of special expertise. The free culture is reducing the willingness to pay for soft news that is available via all channels. It is questionable how far demand and

a willingness to pay for tabloids can be boosted by focusing yet more on human interest and scandal and taking a moralising, emotional approach. So far, tabloids in difficulties – take, for example, *Ringier* – have responded by introducing integrated newsrooms and cross-media, multi-channel journalism. Following on from this trend, these Internet platforms are also to become sales channels for products and services, which would undermine editorial independence.

- *Opinion journalism in the Sunday papers and in sensation-driven magazines:* Compared with the paid subscription newspapers, the competition for readership in the Sunday market is leading to reporting that is far more personalised, morally and emotionally charged and liable to stylise conflicts. The Sunday papers specialise in opinion journalism, exposures (and indiscretions, tuned to the Sunday papers) and in-depth debate on current affairs. The absence of foreign reporting throughout the media arena is not made up for by the Sunday papers, which are orientated either nationally or based on linguistic regions. Nevertheless, the Sunday papers are able to slightly increase their popularity compared with paid subscription newspapers by meeting the need for an in-depth look at current affairs once a week. The news magazine included in the study is equally introspective and, as a niche publication, heavily laden with ideology. The *Weltwoche* carries the most radical opinion journalism in Switzerland, without the facts being checked by any other media. It also presents its stories in a highly moralistic, emotional style. In this field it even surpasses the *SonntagsBlick*.

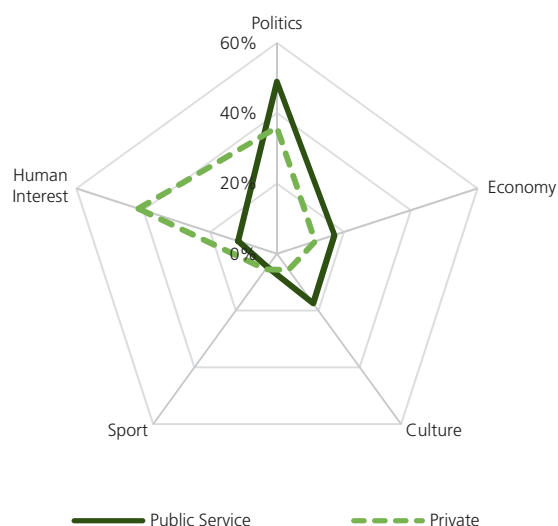
### 3. Radio

- *Infotainment, public-service radio as standard bearer for quality reporting:* As a result of competition from free and online media and further deregulation of the radio market since the revision of the Swiss Radio and Television Act (RTVG) in 2007, news broadcasting on the radio has been coming under pressure recently. Nevertheless, these channels financed by a licence fee are able to provide high-quality news in their magazine format and



**Diagram 5: Lead stories – the levels of society addressed by stories**

The diagram shows as percentages the levels of society addressed by the lead stories of the different radio types. It is based on all the items included in the analysis of lead stories between 5 October and 31 December 2009, with the exception of the “not applicable” category (n = 2341). Interpretation example: Of all the items on public-service radio channels that were studied, 49% addressed (the whole of) society (macro level), 23% the level of organisations (meso), 7% (anonymised) individuals (micro anonymous), 15% individuals in their roles (micro with role focus) and 6% individuals in private and lifestyle contexts (micro without role focus). The public-service channels, with their relatively more intensive political and economic reporting, focused more often on the socially relevant macro level. The commercial broadcasters, on the other hand, with their stronger focus on human interest and sports stories, more often featured lead stories focusing on particularistic or personal issues.



**Diagram 6: Communication events in lead stories – the social spheres that are reported on**

The diagram shows as percentages the different social spheres reported on in the communication events (CEs) forming the lead stories for each radio type. It is based on all the CEs included in the analysis of lead stories between 5 October and 31 December 2009 (n = 977). Interpretation example: Of all CEs reported by the commercial radio channels, 36% were about politics, 11% about the economy, 6% about culture, 5% about sport and 42% about human interest. Compared with the commercial radio channels, the public-service channels focused more on political reporting. In the equally socially relevant spheres of economics and culture, the public-service broadcasters were also characterised by a greater variety of stories.

main news programmes. The tradition of background reporting and their statutory performance mandate mean that public-service radio channels are able to provide socially relevant, diverse coverage across the linguistic regions of subjects of political, economic and cultural interest. The public radio broadcasters are maintaining a public service that is essential for communication in the public sphere. Apart from these news formats provided by the public broadcasters, the commercial radio channels are characterised by a continuous stream of short news summaries and entertainment, episodic updating on news stories, a low level of specialisation and a great deal of infotainment.

- *The dual system and deregulation:* So far, the deregulation of broadcasting, in the form of the introduction of a dual public and commercial system in 1983, and the liberalisation of more market segments under the RTVG in 2007, has barely succeeded in raising the amount of relevant news journalism from commercial providers. The editorial resources they have are too limited. As far as the quality of the journalism is concerned, no one can compete with the public broadcasters in terms of their news services and information formats that specialise in background information. Some of the commercial broadcasters even have to accept lower quality standards in their own territory of local

and regional news. In their less structured, flowing programmes, information journalism on commercial channels is mainly limited to reporting news summaries.

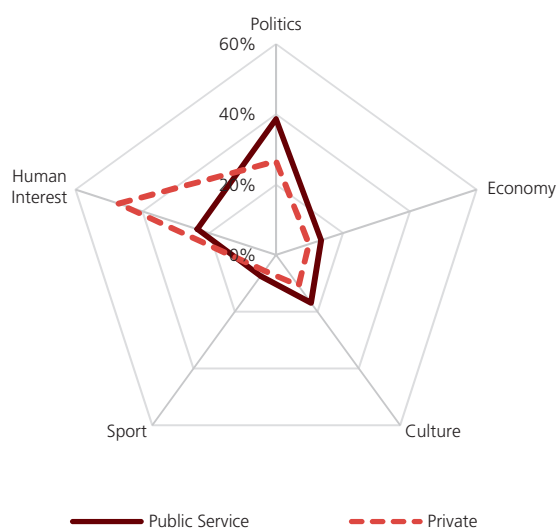
- *Lack of specialisation, event-driven journalism:* What is lacking on the radio in general is a type of information supply with specific formats for dealing in-depth with the social-interest areas of politics, economics and culture that are particularly important for a sense of community, integration and democracy. The public-service radio stations make room for theme-based reporting that puts events into context primarily in their magazine programmes and main news programmes. Private broadcasters barely have room for putting anything into context at all.
- *The social integration function of radio information supply:* With their magazine programmes and main news broadcasts, the public-service radio channels make a substantial contribution to national integration. Compared with other types of media, the radio channels operated by the SRG keep the three linguistic regions well informed, and in similar ways, about important national, international and global affairs. By contrast, the attention paid to national or international events by the commercial providers is limited to the passing-on of short news agency items, or else the focus is on conflicts, personal affairs, threats or debates about identity politics. Of all the media forms and types, public-service radio broadcasters most frequently report on communication events relating to parliamentary processes (e.g., healthcare reform, the debate on unemployment insurance). Here, the public radio broadcasters play a decisive role in providing the flow of information that is central to democracy.
- *Diversity and social relevance:* Stories with socio-political relevance come mainly from public-service radio broadcasters (see diagram 5). If commercial channels do discuss such topics (politics, culture, economics at a macro or meso level), then it is mostly an acquired relevance which is based on news agency reports. Public-service broadcasters make up for their lack of programmes specifically dedicated to politics, economics and culture by offering a generally varied range of relevant stories about politics, economics and (to a lesser

extent) culture in news formats. Compared with this, what commercial broadcasters provide is limited in two ways. When they do cover national events, then background information plays barely any role at all. And for the majority of commercial broadcasters, their local and regional reporting is hardly ever politically, economically or culturally relevant. It is noteworthy that the global financial and economic crisis – despite the scale of its impact – did not feature on the list of the 20 leading communication events reported on radio during the last quarter of 2009. Even the public-service radio broadcasters only accord to this subject a below-average priority.

- *Local, particularistic, event-driven reporting:* Among the commercial channels, the local-regional genre of stories that gives them their profile, because it is exclusive to them, can be characterised as having a strong focus on human interest (see diagram 6). In contrast to the public broadcasters, the commercial radio channels also produce far fewer sustained sequences of reports i.e., they break any event down into individual episodes. This regional tabloidisation and event-driven reporting, combined with a high degree of interest in the private and personal, is a reflection of all-round journalism that is lacking in resources and can only attract attention by using this type of coverage. Although this kind of journalism obtains its own stories mainly from news agencies and from observing the rest of the media arena, it hardly ever reports on these other media.

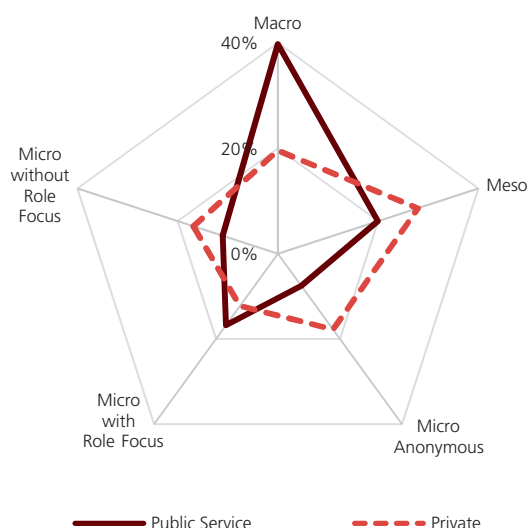
## 4. TV

- *The dual system and deregulation:* The failure of the commercial broadcasters, which came into existence in the linguistic regions after the introduction of a dual system of public-service and commercial broadcasting after 1983, and the failure of Swiss “programme windows” provided by foreign broadcasters both demonstrate the underlying difficulties inherent in the limited market for television in Switzerland. Even the further liberalisation of the advertising market has not improved the economic situation for commercial providers. News journalism on television remains dependent on public channels



**Diagram 7: Communication events in lead stories – the social spheres that are reported on**

The diagram shows as percentages the different social spheres reported on in the communication events (CEs) forming the lead stories for each television type. It is based on all the CEs included in the analysis of lead stories between 5 October and 31 December 2009 (n = 1040). Interpretation example: When the different television types were compared, commercial television had fewer CEs relating to politics (27%), the economy (10%), culture (11%) and sport (6%) in its lead stories and more human interest stories (47%) than public-service TV.



**Diagram 8: Lead stories – the levels of society addressed by stories**

This diagram shows as percentages the levels of society addressed by the lead stories of the different television types. It is based on all the items included in the analysis of lead stories between 5 October and 31 December 2009, with the exception of the “not applicable” category (n = 2447). Interpretation example: When the different television types were compared, the proportion of reporting relevant to the whole of society (macro) was twice as high on public-service television (40%) as on commercial television (20%).

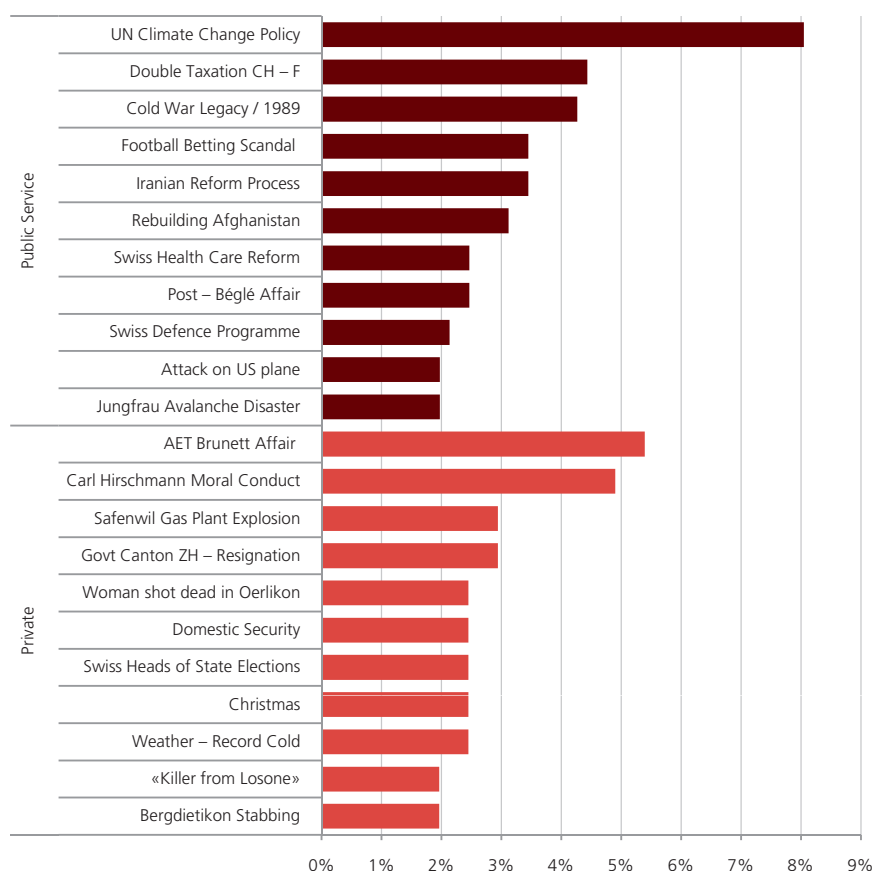
financed by the licence fee, if only because advertising revenue does not go primarily to the commercial TV channels in Switzerland but to the privately owned foreign programmes that are used for entertainment. This is why, so far in Switzerland, hardly any commercial providers have been able to develop any significant information journalism.

- *Liberalisation and shifts in viewership:* While it is mainly the advertising slots of foreign providers that are benefiting from the liberalisation of advertising under the revised RTVG 2007, the SRG is burdened with a loss, with no prospect either of increasing the fees or raising advertising revenue. Public broadcasting is also under pressure due to changes in news consumption. Younger age groups are turning away from public television and towards online media and free newspapers. The same is true of migrant

populations, which are increasingly using media from their home countries.

- *Infotainment, focus on the personal and the emotional:* In terms of the range of news supply available, the importance of infotainment in the visual medium of television is reflected in the emergence as a separate genre of specialised human interest programmes, coming not only from the commercial broadcasters but also from public-service broadcasting. In all forms, television is tending to show more and more soft news. Even the magazine programmes shown by the public channels feature a high proportion of tabloid-style items. Indeed, even in the main news programmes, a growing focus on human interest stories can be seen, and the techniques of emotional and personal appeal are used more frequently than on the radio.





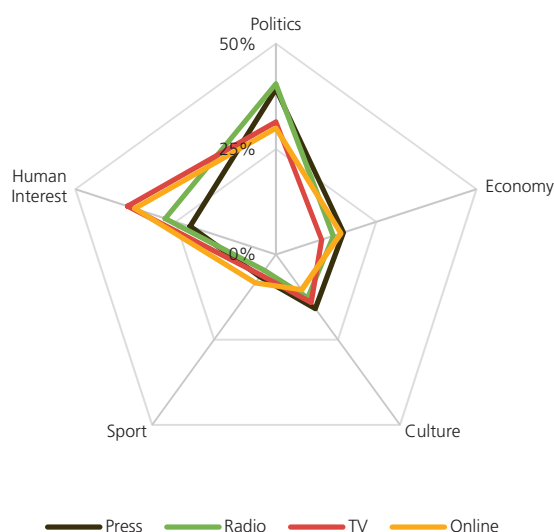
**Diagram 9: Agendas of the different television types – specific focuses**

The diagram shows the 20 main communication events (CEs) for each television type, measured by the proportion of the total reporting on those top 20 CEs for each television type. It shows those CEs which only belong to the top 20 CEs on one of the two types of television. The diagram is based on all the items included in the analysis of lead stories between 5 October and 31 December 2009 relating to the top 20 CEs for each television type (n = 813, of which 609 items were on public-service television channels and 204 on commercial channels).

Interpretation example: The communication event relating to the moral conduct of Carl Hirschmann attracted 4.9% of the attention within the top 20 CEs on the commercial TV agenda during the period of the study. This CE – and ten others – was only in the top 20 CEs for commercial TV channels but not for public-service providers. While the commercial broadcasters concentrated on a few top topics, where the focus can be on the personal, the scandalous and the emotional, and in their other stories also preferred topics relating to sport or human interest, the broadcasts by the public-service TV channels contributed more to exploring socially relevant issues.

- *Social integration function:* Especially the main channels of public-service TV contribute to a television agenda that is socially relevant. Because the reporting focuses more on the personal, the emotional and the episodic, public television performs less of an integrating role than the radio. Private broadcasters concentrate on a few top themes, mainly in the field of human interest (see diagram 7). Because of the high proportion of regional and local stories, the role of commercial broadcasters – which are licensed for particular regions – in inter-regional or national integration is very limited.
- *Specialisation:* The information provided by television is far more specialised than that on the radio. Television dedicates special programme formats to the key areas of politics and culture. However, it is striking that, even on public TV, little time or importance is attached to specialised programmes about the economy.
- *Diversity and social relevance:* Socially relevant topics are covered far more often by public-service broadcasters than by commercial ones (see diagram 8). This is true of both internal political and international events. The way these subjects are handled is less episodic than on the commercial channels and contributes more to the role of public communication services as a forum and a provider of legitimacy, control and social integration. Public-service cultural magazine programmes and cultural forums also provide report-

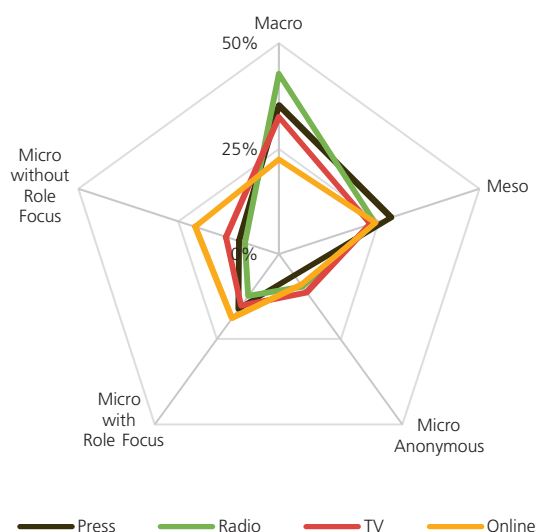




**Diagram 10: Communication events in front page and lead stories – the social spheres that are reported on**

The diagram shows, for the front page and lead stories in each media form, the percentages of communication events (CEs) addressing each social sphere. It is based on all the CEs included in the analysis of front page and lead stories between 5 October and 31 December 2009 (n = 3116).

Interpretation example: When the media forms were compared, the online media had the lowest percentage of front page stories about political (30%) and cultural (10%) CEs and – after television (37%) – the most human interest stories (35%). The online media also accounted for most CEs in the social sphere of sport (8%).



**Diagram 11: Front page and lead stories – the levels of society addressed by stories**

This diagram shows as percentages the levels of society addressed by the front page and lead stories for each media form. It is based on all the items included in the analysis of front page and lead stories between 5 October and 31 December 2009, with the exception of the “not applicable” category (n = 11,610).

Interpretation example: When the media forms were compared, the online media had the lowest percentage of reporting relevant to (the whole of) society (macro level) on their front pages, at 23%, and the highest proportion of reporting on private life (micro without role focus), at 21%.

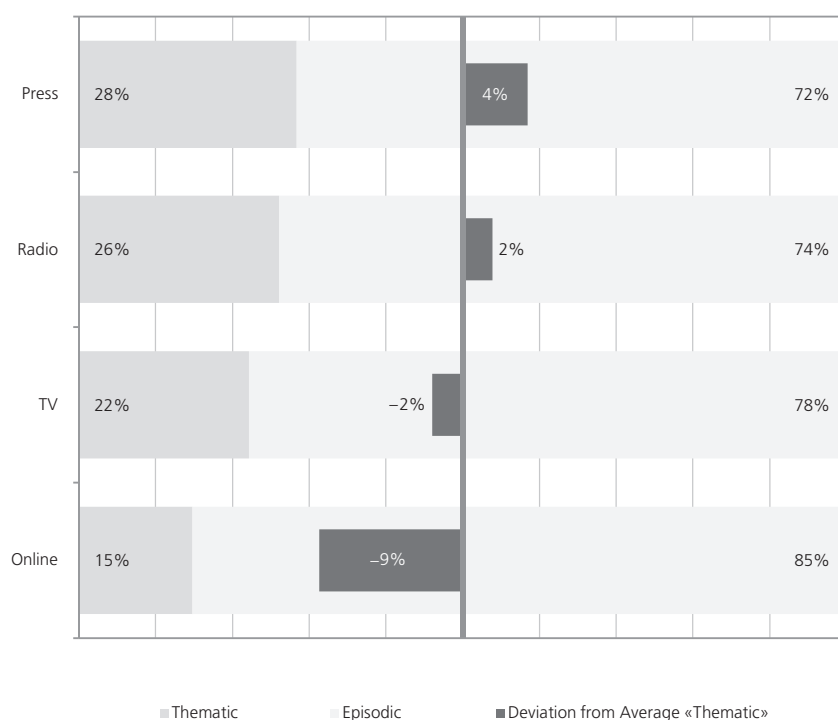
ing which puts events into proper context. However, the diversity and social relevance of the foreign reporting on TV is lagging behind that on radio. On commercial TV channels, the range of news services provided is far less, and this in itself limits their role as conveyors of information. Even where they use a more in-depth magazine format, the commercial channels specialise mainly in human interest stories.

- *Local, particularistic, event-driven reporting:* The quality divide between public-service and commercial TV providers is similar to that on the radio. The agendas of commercial channels are dominated by human interest stories: (local) celebrities and affairs, weather and accidents, as well as cases of murder and manslaughter (see diagram 9). The commercial broadcasters in German-speaking Switzerland also

deal with political and economic stories in a more personal way, focusing on scandal and private lives. There is barely any attempt to convey background information or put events into context. The all-round journalism that is widespread among commercial broadcasters has to compensate for insufficiently specialised editorial structures and limited resources. This can only encourage a focus on soft news.

## 5. Online

- *Levelling-out of the quality of journalism in the media arena:* The most recent of all the media forms that we investigated is successfully drawing the general public away from the traditional news carriers,



**Diagram 12: Front page and lead stories – comparing the time element in different media forms**

The diagram shows the percentages of thematic and episodic features and the extent to which they deviate from the average value for thematic reporting in the four media forms together, for the front page and lead stories in each media form. It is based on all the items included in the analysis of front page and lead stories between 5 October and 31 December 2009 (n = 12,129).

Interpretation example: When the media forms were compared, the online media had the lowest proportion of thematic reporting in their front page and lead stories, at 15%. This puts them 9% below the average for the four media forms together.

the paid subscription newspapers and public radio. News websites – as a consequence of having inadequate financial and human resources – are characterised by a relatively unvaried (see diagram 10) and non-socially relevant (see diagram 11), strongly event-driven way of selecting, presenting and interpreting information. They are dominated by the culture of 24/7 reporting which must always be up-to-date and which, of all the types of information media, depends most on buying and reusing pre-produced material. These news websites, together with the free newspapers, are the most powerful force for change in the Swiss media arena. As free services, the news websites compete with the equivalent printed publications that are dependent on earning revenue, but they do not themselves generate sufficient financial resources. The lower quality in the online sector is causing traditional journalistic quality standards in the media arena to level out and there is a risk of this having a negative impact on the reputation of the parent paper, precisely because

the news websites live by the reputation of the parent paper. Finally, the increased use of news websites by younger people is squeezing the subscription revenue of the printed publications and having a negative socialisation effect in respect of people's awareness of the cost and quality of good journalism.

- *Financing problems, self-cannibalisation:* The introduction of free newspapers and the launch of news websites have brought about cannibalisation of the traditional press industry. The traditional media are losing readers, while, for their part, online services cannot finance themselves adequately through advertising. Intensive efforts are therefore underway to try to launch pay-per-view online services (including, internationally: the *Times* and *Sunday Times* belonging to the News Corporation; the *New York Times*; in Switzerland: a chargeable iPad version of the *Tages-Anzeiger*). However, until there is a concerted effort to put a price on these information services, one must be sceptical about the chances of such undertakings succeeding.

- *Diversity, social relevance and topicality:* The online editorial offices, poorly equipped with both financial and human resources, are under enormous pressure to be topical and up-to-date. The work culture is characterised by adding bylines to minimally changed, “pepped up” news agency reports and by recycling ready-made material. The diversity and social relevance of the range of stories covered by online media are very restricted. They are dominated by a few main topics, preferably in the field of human interest or sport. It is noticeable that online news websites also put a higher-than-average focus on emotionally charged identity politics. In the online sector, background information is in short supply, and the pressure to be topical as a result of having 24/7 reporting governs the journalistic production routine so strongly that there can be barely any mention of longer term political or economic contexts. Users who see the world through news websites are provided with hardly any background information which would help them understand the seemingly rapid succession of isolated events (see diagram 12).
- *Levelling-out of quality standards in the online subscription sector:* Even on the news websites of the paid subscription newspapers, the tabloidisation trend that dominates online services continues unabated. In the online versions of the paid subscription newspapers, with very few exceptions (*NZZ Online*), far less space is devoted to the socially relevant spheres of politics, economics and culture than in their parent publications. Admittedly, when all online media are compared, the news websites of the paid subscription newspapers do focus the most on matters relevant to society as a whole. However, the online subscription versions show a marked “dumbing down” of these socially relevant areas compared with the printed versions i.e., online subscription services match the way these topics are covered in the free and tabloid papers. This trend is most noticeable in *Tagesanzeiger.ch* and the news websites of the *Tribune de Genève* and *24 heures*, whereas the online portal of *NZZ* is the most similar to its parent publication.
- *Online tabloids and online free papers:* The news websites of the tabloid media are dominated by sports and human interest reporting on accidents, crime

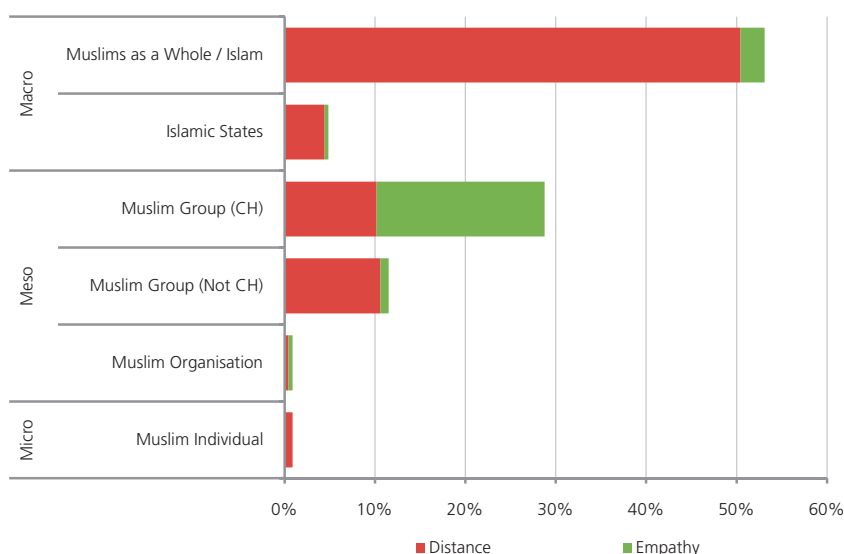
and natural curiosities. Political and economic stories, on the other hand, are neglected, unless they can be personalised, dramatised or given a whiff of scandal. The reason why the proportion of political, economic and foreign news in online tabloids and free papers is actually slightly higher than that in the offline editions is because they reuse news agency reports.

- *Agenda relevance of the news websites:* Because they are closely observed by journalists in general, because audience use of each news item can be easily measured and because of the great pressure to be topical in order to ensure the highest possible click rate, these news websites are very important in continually determining the news agenda of the overall media arena.

## 6. In-depth studies

### 6.1 Quality of media reporting on the Minaret Initiative

- *Aims and method:* This in-depth study looked at the quality of reporting on the Minaret Initiative in the leading media in German- and French-speaking Switzerland. It examined the variety of actors and opinions and the quality of the debate in terms of giving equal coverage to opposing viewpoints, avoiding generalisations and conveying background information. The results are based on analysis of the content of all articles on the communication event known as the “Minaret Initiative” that appeared in seventeen leading media sources in German- and French-speaking Switzerland in the period from April 2006 to November 2009. The in-depth study produced the following main findings.
- *High proportion of generalised negative stereotyping of Muslims:* The reporting on the Minaret Initiative should be seen in the context of a media focus on Islam and Muslims in the light of international conflicts (war, terrorism) and the Libya affair. In this conflict-charged context, with the focus on Islamic terrorists, general stereotypes and the rigid semantics of difference directed at Muslim actors were widespread in the media (see diagram 13).
- *Episodic reporting with little reflection, concentrating on questions of form:* In the most intense phase



**Diagram 13: Stereotyping of and generalisations about Muslims**

The diagram shows the stereotyping of Muslims in the reporting on the Minaret Initiative. A distinction is made between stereotyping which creates distance and that which creates empathy. A distinction is also made as to whether the stereotyping refers to specific, named actors (individuals, groups, states) or to Muslims and Islam in general. The data is based on all examples in the reporting of explicit stereotyping of Muslims (n = 226).

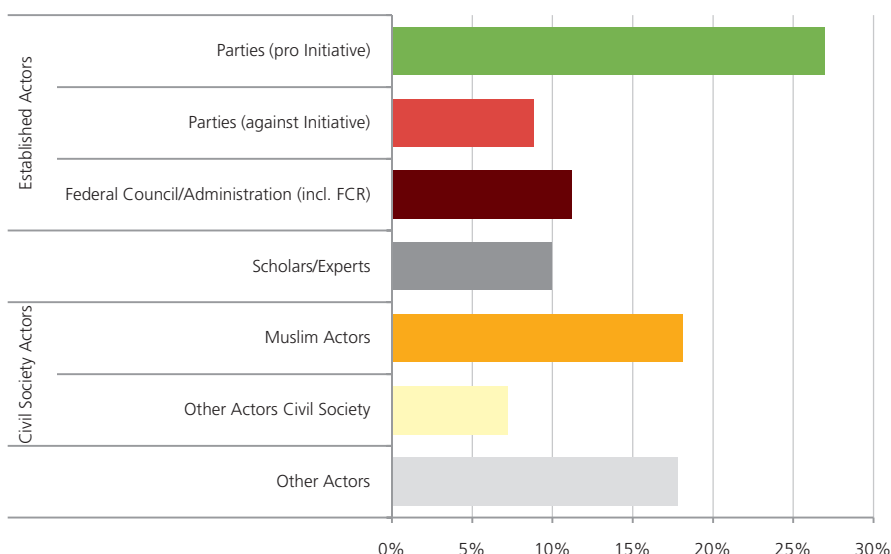
Interpretation example: In 53% of all cases when Muslim actors are mentioned, it is Muslims as a whole – or Islam – that are portrayed and thus generalized. Within this collective stereotyping of Muslims, 94% of the reporting had a distancing effect. The image of Muslims conveyed during the debate about the Minaret Initiative was predominantly negative (about three quarters of cases), and the stereotyping was largely generalised. This means that the statements in question barely distinguished between Islamist groups and the Muslim minority in Switzerland, but talked generally about “Islam” and “Muslims”. Such generalisations restrict insight into the diversity of different Muslim groupings and encourage the idea of a connection between members of these heterogeneous branches of the faith with fundamentalist movements within Islam.

of reporting, during the last two months before the vote, most of the coverage was episodic, reflecting little on the real issue. For a long time, the dynamics of the reporting were defined almost entirely by the debate about the anti-minaret poster and the Internet minaret game. Both the poster and the minaret game turned out to be excellent campaign tools, because they suited the media’s agenda perfectly and so triggered and then largely determined the actual debate about the vote. The debate in this phase was also very much characterised by a focus on questions of form (style, breaking taboos) instead of on content. Debate about whether it is right to regard Muslims in Switzerland as a problem or about the relationship between the rule of law and democracy was barely heard at all in the media before the vote.

- *Unequal representation of supporters/opponents, communication dysfunction:* There was a striking imbalance

between the parties supporting the ban on minarets (three quarters of the coverage given to political parties) and the parties objecting to it (one quarter of the coverage) (see diagram 14). This means that the proportions of supporters and opponents in media coverage were the exact opposite of those in Parliament. Furthermore, the debate in the media displayed a remarkable communication dysfunction with severe consequences. Neither the supporters nor the opponents of the initiative paid virtually any attention to the arguments of the other side. Even the most sweeping stereotypes remained unopposed in the media arena.

- *Conclusion:* Firstly, in the context of international conflicts and as a result of the way the subject was handled by those opposing minarets, the image of militant Islam became firmly established in public opinion as conveyed by the media. Secondly, the



**Diagram 14: Diversity of actors – speakers in media coverage**

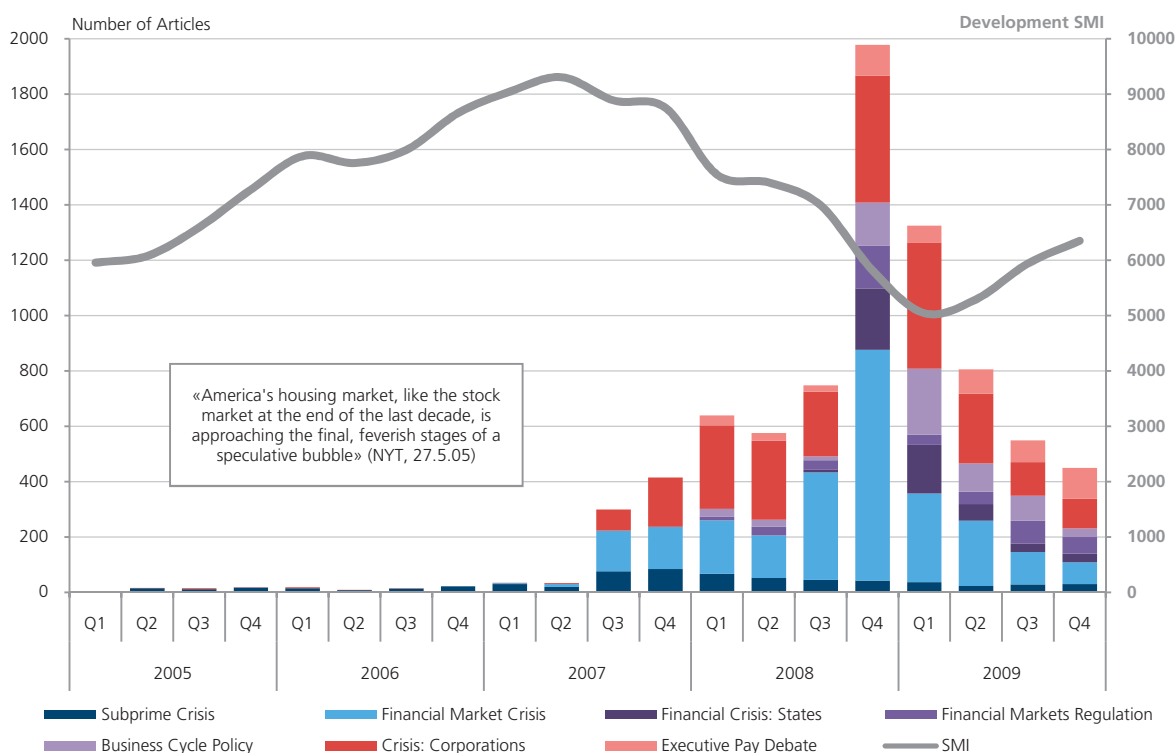
The diagram shows the groups of people who had the opportunity to speak in the media in the context of the Minaret Initiative. The data is based on no more than three central statements that were recorded for each item. The actors were grouped together in categories. All the statements together form 100%. This evaluation does not include statements by the media itself (n = 624 statements).

Interpretation example: Of the total of 624 statements which received most attention, 168 were made by representatives of parties which spoke out in favour of the Initiative. This group of actors therefore received most attention, at 27% of all statements. If you regard the relative majorities in the two parliamentary chambers (in the National Council 78%, in the Council of States 93% against the Minaret Initiative) as a benchmark for the coverage given to the political parties in mass media reporting, then a remarkable phenomenon can be seen: between the parliamentary and media arenas, the relative majorities are exactly reversed. In media coverage, the parties voting against the Minaret Initiative received only about a quarter of the attention, while the parties in favour of the ban were able to take up three quarters of the coverage given to all party representatives.

opponents of the initiative paid barely any attention to this generalised interpretation which therefore implicitly also included Muslims in Switzerland. On the other hand, the supporters did not contradict the central argument of the opponents, who pointed out that a ban on minarets would affect religious freedom. So the arguments of the two camps systematically passed each other by. Thirdly, there was an over-representation – striking given the majority that existed in Parliament – of the parties supporting the initiative in the media debate. Fourthly and lastly, the media did not portray the debate about the vote primarily as a debate between political actors (supporters and opponents) but as one between the supporters of the initiative and the Muslim minority in Switzerland.

## 6.2 Economic coverage during the financial crisis

- *Aims and method:* During periods of crisis, the question is regularly raised about the early warning function of the media in relation to undesirable developments i.e., about the seismographic quality of the public debate conducted in the media. This is measured by the extent to which the media are able to detect trends early on, put them into context and point at the consequences. This in-depth study therefore looks at the quality of the economic coverage in relation to the current financial and economic crisis. The study was based on analysing the content of important national and international media during the period from 2005 to 2009. A longitudinal study also analysed the long-term changes



**Diagram 15: Crisis in the financial markets – changes in focus from 2005 to 2009**

The tiered columns of the diagram show the trends in media coverage of the crisis in the financial markets in Switzerland's leading media (*Neue Zürcher Zeitung, Tages-Anzeiger, Blick, Tagesschau, 10vor10, Echo der Zeit, Rendez-vous*) in the period from 2005 to 2009. It is based on the news items relating to the communication events in the Swiss media arena which were directly connected with the crisis ( $n = 7244$ ). The curve shows trends in the SMI (Swiss Market Index) over the period (average values for each quarter).

Interpretation example: The global economic crisis only became a more central story in the Swiss media extremely late i.e., only from spring/summer 2007 onwards. Economic coverage in Switzerland was not able to warn of the massive upheavals in the global economy in advance, even though the inherent risks in the system had been known about since the «new economy» crisis. Only after the financial problems and collapse of the mortgage-lending banks in Great Britain and the USA became obvious did the media begin to take a closer interest in events on the US subprime market and their consequences for companies in the financial industry. The increase in the intensity of coverage about the crisis in the financial markets from the third quarter of 2007 was accompanied by a steady decline in the SMI. This intensity of coverage diminished relatively quickly at the start of 2009. As soon as news of spectacular company collapses began to ebb away, media interest also flattened off. As the intensity of coverage became less, the SMI recovered (delayed by one quarter).

in economic coverage between 1962 and 2009. The in-depth study produced the following key findings.

- *Failure of the seismographic function:* The seismographic function i.e., warning of the crisis in the financial markets early on, was not performed by either the Swiss or international leading media (see diagram 15). Admittedly, a few media sources did point out as early as 2005 the risks inherent in the bubble that was forming, especially on the US prop-

erty market. However, this interpretation remained on the fringes and it did not reflect the economic and social consequences. The crisis was only recognised by the media very late i.e., in the second half of 2007. This was at a time when it was already known that mortgage-lending banks were in serious difficulty and that the hedge funds of major banks (e.g., UBS Dillon Read) were experiencing catastrophic losses. Even during this phase, reporting remained

focused on specific companies, branches of industry and regions of the world. There was barely any analysis of possible systemic risks.

- *Event-driven economic coverage:* While a dangerous bubble was growing ever bigger in the American subprime sector, for a long time the media headlines concentrated on the impressive turnover and profits of leading banks on the one hand and on the scandal of executives' pay on the other. This strongly event-driven economic coverage, with the focus on individual actors (companies, CEOs), was blind to the risks of a global financial industry based on derivative financial products. Compared with the 1960s and 1970s, the macro focus of coverage of processes that affected society as a whole, or the national economy, had weakened in favour of a meso or micro focus on companies, performance and personalities in the 1990s and 2000s. This also meant that there was inadequate highlighting in journalistic terms of the radical change from traditional banking to a global financial industry. As a result, the possible consequences for the stability of economic and social development were nowhere near correctly assessed. It was only after the near-collapse of this financial industry that the causes and consequences were debated.
- *Eruptive inflation and rapid deflation:* With the dramatic intensification of the crisis in the context of Lehman Brothers and UBS, from autumn 2008 there was also a great increase in media coverage. Only now did the electronic media and the tabloid press also take up this subject. However, this rather late inflation of reporting of the crisis was followed by an even faster deflation of the crisis as a subject of interest. At the same time as the major banks reported their first quarterly profit again and market prices rose in the spring of 2009, the crisis retreated, even though the fundamental problems had not been resolved and major new problems were on the horizon (threat of national bankruptcy, debt crisis). It is only thanks to political actors and some political journalists, who voiced their opinion during the talks within supra-national political institutions (EU, G8, G20, IMF, OECD), and thanks to the Swiss National Bank that there was some discussion at all about what actually could be learnt from the crisis.
- *Conclusion:* With the exception of a very few high-quality international products, current economic journalism needs to hit the reset button, deploy more resources and risk more controversy. It has learnt nothing from the same type of reporting before the dotcom crisis, and it is clearly far too uncontroversial. The economic affairs desks, which were expanded especially in the 1990s, have not become what they should have, namely journalistic spheres for debate about the problems and opportunities of a global economy.



The mark of the printing and publishing house Schwabe, founded in 1488, dates back to the very beginnings of the art of printing and derives from the circle of artists around Hans Holbein. It is the printer's mark of the Petris, and illustrates Jeremiah 23:29: "Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?"



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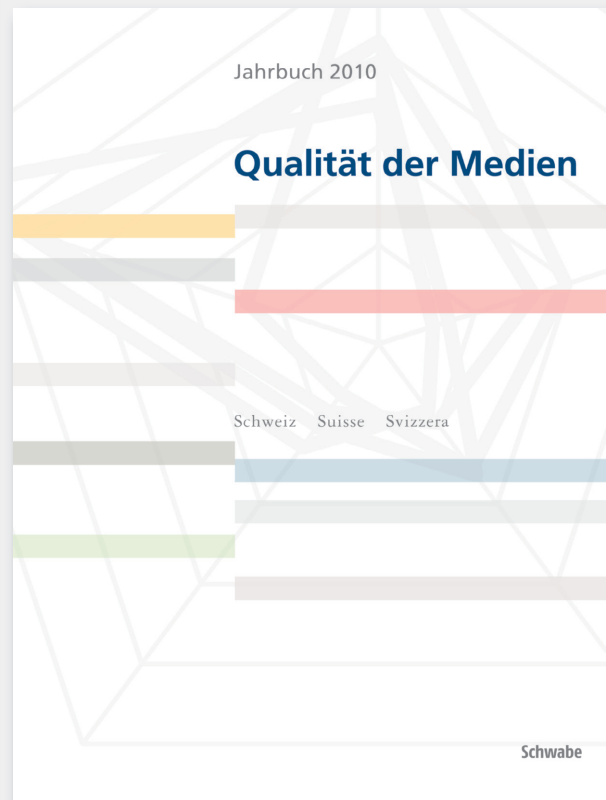
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**Das erste Jahrbuch «Qualität der Medien –  
Schweiz Suisse Svizzera»**

Bereits im 5. Jahrhundert vor unserer Zeitrechnung entstand im Stadtstaat Athen eine der wirkmächtigsten Utopien der Menschheit: Die Idee, dass eine freie Gesellschaft eine freie öffentliche Kommunikation voraussetzt, in der sich das bessere Argument durchsetzen kann. In der Tat zeigt die Geschichte der Demokratie, dass diese ohne qualitativ gute Öffentlichkeit zerfällt. Die Öffentlichkeit dient der Wahrnehmung und Diskussion der allgemeinverbindlich zu lösenden Probleme. Sie erfüllt eine Kontrollfunktion gegenüber den Staatsgewalten, und ohne Öffentlichkeit liesse sich die zwischen den Bürgerinnen und Bürgern notwendige Loyalität nicht erzeugen, die für eine Rechtsgemeinschaft unverzichtbar ist. Die Qualität der Demokratie ist somit untrennbar mit der Qualität der Öffentlichkeit verknüpft, die massgeblich durch Informationsmedien hergestellt wird.

Allerdings entbehrt das seit dem Niedergang der Parteizeitungen und seit der Dualisierung der audiovisuellen Medien in den 1980er Jahren zu einer eigenständigen Sphäre ausdifferenzierte Mediensystem einer kritischen Beobachtungsinstanz, die die Veränderungen dieses Mediensystems und der Qualität der öffentlichen Kommunikation nachzeichnet und dem öffentlichen Diskurs aussetzt. Um diese Lücke zu schliessen, wurde das Jahrbuch «Qualität der Medien – Schweiz Suisse Svizzera» geschaffen. Es verschafft im Jahr 2010 erstmalig und danach jedes Jahr neu einen Überblick über die Veränderungen der publizistischen Versorgung und der Medienqualität in der Schweiz. Sprachregionale Unterschiede der publizistischen Versorgung, die Publikumsflüsse zwischen verschiedenen Mediengattungen, die Eigentums- und Einnahmestrukturen der Verlage, Konzentrationsprozesse sowie die Veränderungen des Medienkonsums werden ebenso aufgezeigt wie der Wandel der Inhalte und der Berichterstattungsqualität.

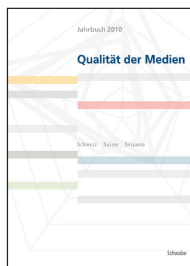
Berücksichtigt werden sämtliche Gattungen der Informationsmedien, das heisst Pressetitel, Informationssendungen der privaten und öffentlichen Radio- und Fernsehanbieter sowie die Newssites des Onlinesegments.

Das Jahrbuch wird erarbeitet durch den fög – Forschungsbereich Öffentlichkeit und Gesellschaft / Universität Zürich ([www.foeg.uzh.ch](http://www.foeg.uzh.ch)). Es wird gefördert von der gemeinnützigen Stiftung Öffentlichkeit und Gesellschaft ([www.oeffentlichkeit.ch](http://www.oeffentlichkeit.ch)) und von vielen Donatoren. Sein Ziel ist die Stärkung des Bewusstseins für die Qualität der Medien. Das Jahrbuch bildet eine Quelle für Medienschaffende, Akteure aus Politik und Wirtschaft, die Wissenschaft und alle anderen Interessierten, die sich mit der Entwicklung der Medien und ihren Inhalten auseinandersetzen. Die aktuelle Ausgabe 2010 zeigt unter anderem, dass die wirtschaftliche Krise der Informationsmedien und die Gratiskultur den Trend zu inhaltsarmen Soft News verstärken.

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